**The possession of knowledge carries an ethical responsibility. Evaluate this claim.**

Knowledge of any sort gives one a sense of power and the way in which the knowledge one obtains is used is based on the person’s ethics. Ones ethics are commonly based on reason and emotion as a way of knowing; either one feels what they are doing is correct or has reasons to justify that what they are doing is correct, bearing in mind that one persons reasons may not be justifiable for their actions in another person’s opinion. As in any argument there are different cases; where knowledge doesn’t carry an ethical responsibility and strong examples where knowledge does carry an ethical responsibility, depending on the knowledge obtained and the ways in which this knowledge is used. Ethics are hard to discuss as ones ethics may differ to another. They can’t be tested and depending on the different societies people are in, moral principles can be different. However there are some global moral principles that humans as the most intelligent species of life agree upon.

Consider Albert Einstein and the creation of the atomic bomb. Einstein refused to be of service in World War 2. This allows one to assume that Einstein wished to do what was morally correct giving one a positive look on his ethical decisions. However, Einstein was morally inconsistent as he later signed a letter to President Roosevelt insisting the creating of the atomic bomb using his scientific knowledge (Einstein’s theory of matter). The negative effects the bomb had on Hiroshima gives one reasons to assume that what Einstein did was morally incorrect. Surely with Einstein’s knowledge, he was aware of what he was doing. Apparently not. Einstein knew there would be damage but he was not aware of the chain reaction, although after it had happened he understood why. Einstein said “I made one great mistake in my life... when I signed the letter to President Roosevelt recommending that atom bombs be made; but there was some justification - the danger that the Germans would make them.” If Einstein had not insisted on the creation of these bombs, Germany could have created them and caused more destruction. Einstein was put in a position where he did what he personally thought was morally correct. In such a situation there’s no right or wrong as the ones personal judgement on what is right is taken into account and the decision is made. Although it created a lot of damage to both people and place, it did mark the end of the Second World War and there was guilt felt by the scientific genius, so how sure can one be when criticizing Einstein’s ethics?

Other examples such as educated specialists that have the knowledge to do many different things, from repairing cars to saving lives, however this knowledge comes with a great deal of ethical responsibility. Take the case of a doctor. Many people claim to want to help people and that is why they become doctors, however doctors are human too and are able to make mistakes and also worry about self-interests, which allows one to question the moral principles of the healthcare specialist. For example, suppose a thief was shot and needed medical care. The doctor is put in a position of saving a life or letting a criminal die. Depending on the doctors ethics a decision is made, however as a professional the doctor is in fact obliged to treat the patient and not allow his/her emotions to affect their job. Saving the life could be admirable or could be seen as ridiculous as the doctor saved a criminal. The doctor could lose his/her title if they don’t treat the patient therefore there is an element of self interest in this situation. Therefore the doctor’s knowledge puts them in a position to consider what they believe is morally correct and do so. Another example of a healthcare professional is a dentist. Dentists can have hidden benefits in what they do, for instance, a patient comes in and is in pain, the dentist can help them the same and get paid for one day of helping this specific patient, or he/she could make the patient wait come some other time so they can get paid for two sessions. This all depends on the dentist’s ethics and whether they’re more interested in getting the job done and helping relieve someone of pain or self-interests.

Looking at more everyday life situations that many people face such as noticing someone copy you on a test. This person could have many personal problems and might need to copy you to pass, however this could get you in trouble too if anyone were to see. The person who’s being copied from has to make a decision as to expose someone that needed the help or to risk one’s own grade form being lost.

Suppose there is a situation where having some knowledge doesn’t carry an ethical responsibility. For example, I notice my neighbour is giving birth and is being looked after. This doesn’t burden me with an ethical responsibility as the neighbour is doing fine regardless of whether I knew she was pregnant or not. However, there are exceptions to such arguments such as, in the case where the mother lives in unhygienic conditions and this will not be a suitable environment for the child. Therefore I will have to make a decision to either report the mother, possibly saving the child’s life but at the same time deprive the mother of her child which could be seen as morally incorrect.

In most cases knowledge comes with an ethical responsibility, especially when it’s concerned with the higher levels of education. In everyday situations, there are some in which one will not have an ethical responsibility and the knowledge they obtain could be useless to them or it could be the complete opposite. In such situations it depends on how the knowledge is used and who it is used by. Knowing that my neighbour is pregnant could mean something to my other neighbour as they could be related and they have the ethical responsibility to congratulate and meet the newborn whereas to me it had no significance in my life, unless there was the exception such as, she was an unfit mother or lived in an unsafe environment as stated above. In that case it would be my responsibility to report that, where I’ll have to consider taking a child away from its mother and whether that is fair on the mother or to not do anything which once again is seen as morally incorrect. Depending on what you believe is right and what your conscience tells you to do is how you make a decision on what to do in such cases. Therefore it’s safe to conclude that the statement above is conditional and knowledge mostly comes with an ethical responsibility depending on who obtains the knowledge and what is done with it.